

Conference Abstract

An Introduction to the Minimum Information about a Digital Specimen (MIDS) Digitisation Standard

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Abstract

Digitisation is the process of converting analogue data about physical specimens to digital representation that includes electronic text, images and other forms. The term has been used diversely within the natural science collections community, and between different digitisation initiatives, the outputs can be quite different.

Digitisation of individual specimens provides explicit and precise details about each object curated in a collection. This digitisation is based on diverse aims, the needs of specific projects and the specific practices and workflows in different institutions, so the digitised output has a wide range of uses. Capturing and presenting such data from future digitisation in standard formats is essential so that data can be more easily understood, compared, analysed and communicated via the Internet. By harmonising a framework that clarifies what is meant by different levels of digitisation (MIDS level), as well as the minimum information to be captured at each level, it becomes easier to consistently measure the extent of digitisation achieved over time and to set priorities for the remaining work. Similarly, ensuring that enough data are captured, curated and published is essential so they are useful for the widest possible range of future research, teaching and learning purposes.

The Minimum Information about a Digital Specimen (MIDS) specification aims to address these problems. MIDS is a 'minimum specification', which means that the information specified as necessary at a each MIDS level is the minimum expected to be made digitally available following each major stage of digitisation. More is not precluded.

From September 2020, MIDS specification work is now the work topic of an approved TDWG Task Group.

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